

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 22-26, 28-31, 33, 35, 39, 51 and 59-69 of the application remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the Siegmund, Allred, Kurtzer and Santangelo references. Dependent claims have been rejected in combination with these references along with the Woodard or Eastman references.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of the claims and note the following for consideration. The invention relates to a small diameter endoscope for use in orthopedic imaging.

Thus, Applicants have invented a small diameter endoscope for diagnostic orthopedic imaging having a first disposable component, namely, the probe, and a second disposable component, the cannula. The cannula extends over the removable probe to provide for percutaneous entry that is required for orthopedic applications. The cannula can be attached to the removable (disposable) probe with a locking mechanism and can also include a fluid delivery port. This provides an interconnected three component system that is not described or suggested in the cited references.

Applicants further respectfully traverse the rejected based on Siegmund, Allred, Kurtzer and Santangelo. In particular, one skilled in the art would not be motivated to provide Siegmund

device at the claimed size in view of the resulting loss in image size and resolution and thereby compromise diagnostic value. There is also no teaching in the references using a cannula with a small diameter disposable device or of a handle incorporating both the imaging device and the light source for use with a such a device. The rejection of this combination with the light source was apparently based on the use by Siegmund of a fiber optic connector 41 at coupling point 43. However, Siegmund expressly teaches the use of a "remote light source 33" that is outside the handle (See Siegmund at Col. 4, lines 36-40). Applicants note that Kurtzer also teaches coupling to an external light source with light cable 18, thereby making the covering 20 more complex and less effective at isolating the handle. Applicants submit that it would not be obvious to combine the recited features in a small diameter orthopedic imaging device. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

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The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney to discuss any matter that would expedite allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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